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SERVICE

A'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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JAPANESE FLOWERING CHERRY TREES

Famous, Beautiful, Symbolic. Each spring--somewhere between the last of March and the last of April--is Cherry Blossom Time in Washington, D.C. The exact dates for this eagerly-awaited event depends on when the Japanese flowering cherry trees that landscape the city bloom. Many thousands of visitors are drawn to the Capitol to view the blossoming trees that surround the Tidal Basin, dot the edges of Potomac Park, cluster on the Washington Monument grounds and turn these and other areas of the city into a pink-tinged fairyland. Just in time for this year's blossoming, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has published a detailed account of the origin and history of the cherry trees, a gift to the U.S. from Japan. The booklet tells the story of the diplomacy and protocol which took place between Japan and the United States in the early 1900s in order to introduce the trees into this country. It all became a little touchy when the first shipment of trees in 1910 had to be destroyed. The booklet includes biographical sketches of the officials and scientists who worked together to establish the cherry trees in America and tells of the latter-day events that have added interest and importance to the living gift. Single free copies of "The Japanese Flowering Cherry Trees of Washington, D.C." may be obtained from the Office of Governmental and Public Affairs, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

CHICKEN WITH DARK MEAT . . . AND BONES

Questions You May Not Have Thought To Ask. Several consumers have written to USDA to ask why some chicken bones turn dark after cooking and why the meat next to the bones has dark areas. The answer, according to a USDA poultry inspection official, is that this darkening is a natural condition related to the blood pigment in the bone. It used to be that chickens were not killed or marketed until they were several months old. Now, with modern technology, chickens are produced and marketed in less than 8 weeks. In these young birds, bones are still rich in blood supply, some of which seeps into adjacent tissue after slaughter. As the bird is cooked, the pink bones and tissue sometimes change to a brownish color, becoming even darker as the temperature increases during cooking. The inspector said that while the dark appearance may be unattractive, it does not affect the wholesomeness, safety or flavor of the chicken.



PEAS IN YOUR PORRIDGE

And In Your Bread, Too. Bread is a big item in our diets; Americans eat some 50 million pounds of it daily. Since we like it so much, it is a good thing that bread is good for us. But for all its valuable nutrition, bread has a shortcoming: The wheat that goes into bread is high in protein but has an imbalance in the amino acid that makes up that protein. Specifically, wheat is low in lysine, the amino acid that determines the human body's ability to use protein. Researchers have been looking for a material high in lysine which could be used to fortify wheat flour. Soy flour, the most often-used material, is nutritionally useful but strong flavored. Recently, scientists of the Science and Education Administration found that flour made from ground peas just might fill the bill. They found that substituting 15 percent of the wheat flour in a loaf of bread with pea flour boosts the total protein value of the loaf by 15 percent, all without affecting taste, baking quality or increasing the cost of producing the bread. In addition, breads fortified with pea flour are high in fibers and carbohydrates but low in fats. Interestingly, the scientists first tried yellow peas rather than green peas thinking the yellow color would have less affect on the final color of the bread dough. However, they learned that most of the pea flour color is bleached out during baking so green peas do not make green bread . . . which might be hard to swallow.

USDA REORGANIZATION

New Combinations And Call Letters. During recent months, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has been undergoing reorganization involving the combination of some agencies, realignment of some duties, and a list of new alphabetical names to learn. Included among major changes are, briefly, the new Office of Governmental and Public Affairs (GPA) which combines functions of the Office of Communication, the Office of Congressional and Public Affairs, and the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; the Economics, Statistics and Cooperative Service (ESCS), a combination of the Economic Research Service, the Statistical Reporting Service and the Farmer Cooperative Service; and the Science and Education Administration (SEA--pronounced See-Ah) which brings together the Agricultural Research Service, the Cooperative State Research Service and the Extension Service. Earlier a new agency, the Food Safety and Quality Service (FSQS), was formed from components of the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. (See SERVICE, May 1977, #146.)

MINK'S MALADY

May Aid In Human Disease Research. The interest in minks has mainly been in their beautiful skins being made into beautiful coats. However, researchers of USDA's Science and Education Administration (SEA) have noted that minks and humans share something else besides the minks' skins. The researchers have identified a new disease in mink as a hereditary disorder affecting skeletal muscles throughout the body. The mink disorder strongly resembles human muscular dystrophy. This disease, which affects more than 250,000 persons in the U.S., progressively wastes muscles in the body, impairing muscle strength. Little is understood about its treatment. Studying mink afflicted with the newly-identified disease could provide better understanding and possibly treatment of muscular dystrophy in humans.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write Lillie Vincent, Editor of Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Governmental and Public Affairs, Special Reports Division, Room 459-A, Washington, DC 20250, or Telephone 202-447-5437.
